



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS

It's that time of the year when we are busy decking the halls, shopping, wrapping presents, writing cards and letters, baking, visiting our loved ones, and attending holiday programs and concerts.

South Dakota has a proud history of military heroes, and as we approach the holiday season, let us not forget the service to this country that has spanned the generations. Let us not forget the families of current and past soldiers, as they also endured a great deal while loved ones were deployed.

We wish you and your family a blessed holiday season and a new year of peace and happiness. As you and your family gather this holiday season, please keep our heroes, past and present in your hearts. God bless our veterans, their families, and our troops that are currently serving in harm's way.

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SDDVA AND AVERA PARTNER TO ENHANCE VETERANS' END-OF-LIFE CARE

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and Avera have partnered to build a consortium of veteran volunteers to ensure that excellent care at the end of life is available for our veterans.

Avera@Home Hospice began a partnership with the We Honor Veterans program three years ago. The program's goals, while straightforward, require a collaboration between hospice professionals and leaders in veterans care. As Avera continues collaboration with the Department and partners, they will build a coalition of volunteers to provide veteran-to-veteran service.

"Veteran volunteers can share their training, history and common language," said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Veterans never take off their uniforms, even when they retire or complete active service. Their core values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage are rooted in who they are."

Avera Hospice teams provide care in veterans' homes, long-term care facilities and rural hospitals.

"Whenever a physician recommends hospice care, we are there as a team to provide it," said Megan Enfield, lead social worker with Avera@Home. "When we provide it for a veteran, we now know how to make the experience more personal and relevant to their specific needs, as well as the needs of their families."



Whitlock said veterans have unique needs based on when and with which branch they served.

"When we can acknowledge their rank, and the facts about their enlistment and experiences, including those in combat or that led to injuries, we can make veterans realize we honor them," he said. "Veterans are more apt to open their doors and share their stories when we recognize their service. We can join them, as comrades, in remembrance as well as in celebration of accomplishments."

Whitlock said the voluntary commitment that Avera's care teams have made by incorporating the We Honor Veterans program in their hospice services is noteworthy.

"We appreciate Avera's commitment to our heroes and look forward to this partnership," said Whitlock. "In January, our Department, Avera and Hughes County Veterans Service Office will host an information-sharing event, and we have invited over 40 veterans to join us so they might learn about this great volunteering opportunity."

You can learn more about the program at Avera.org.

SIMONEAU NAMED SIOUX FALLS VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM DIRECTOR

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Lisa J. Simoneau, FACHE, PMP as the new director of the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System (HCS).

“Ms. Simoneau has sound leadership qualities and proven experience,” said Mr. Robert McDivitt, VA Midwest Health Care Network Director. “I am certain she will be an asset to our network, our employees and volunteers, our health care partners, the community, and most importantly, for the veterans we are honored to serve.”

Ms. Simoneau has been with VA for over 30 years. She currently serves as the associate director for the South Texas Veterans Health Care System, San Antonio, TX.

Ms. Simoneau earned her Bachelor of Arts in politics from Randolph-Macon Woman’s College, Lynchburg, VA and a Master of Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL. She completed the Harvard Senior Executive Fellows Program in 2018. She is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and a graduate of Leadership VA 2006. She is board certified in health care management.

The Sioux Falls VA HCS includes a 98-bed medical center and five Community Based Outpatient Clinics. It provides inpatient and outpatient care for veterans in eastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota, and northwestern Iowa. Services include primary and specialty medical care, mental health services, and

rehabilitation. Affiliated with The Sanford School of Medicine of the University of South Dakota, it supports residency programs in internal medicine, psychiatry, and pathology, plus a fellowship in geriatrics. In addition, the facility also has a pharmacy residency.



VA INTRODUCES NEW DIRECT DEPOSIT OPTION FOR VETERANS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in partnership with the [Association of Military Banks of America \(AMBA\)](#), launched the [Veterans Benefits Banking Program \(VBBP\)](#), available starting Dec. 20.

The program will provide veterans and their beneficiaries the chance to safely, reliably, and inexpensively receive and manage their VA monetary benefits through financial services at participating banks.

“VBBP offers another way to simplify banking choices to help eligible veterans select the right bank for themselves and their families,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The VA and AMBA are proud to provide this opportunity to connect veterans with banks that understand their needs.”

VA’s collaboration with AMBA will leverage its consortium of military-friendly financial institutions that cater to service members. AMBA is the only trade association representing banking institutions specializing in providing services for military personnel, veterans, and their families around the world. VBBP leverages participating AMBA institutions and banks operating within the gates of installations of all branches of service and National Guard and Reserve components.

The current available banking options include direct deposit into an existing bank account, electronic funds transfer into a Direct Express pre-paid debit card and mailing of a paper check for pre-approved beneficiaries. VBBP introduces new financial resources to veterans and their beneficiaries.

The program is an effort to address the problems some veterans experience using these payment methods. VBBP offers these VA beneficiaries – including many who have been unable to open bank accounts in the past – the opportunity to deposit their benefit funds directly into existing or new bank accounts offered by participating AMBA member banks.

Neither the VA nor AMBA is endorsing any particular bank or requiring veterans and other beneficiaries to use them. It does not require veterans who are satisfied with their current financial situation to change how they receive their VA monetary benefits.

All veterans and other beneficiaries – who currently receive more than \$118 billion in financial benefits through VA – are eligible to access this program. There are approximately 250,000 veterans and beneficiaries who receive their VA benefits through a pre-paid debit card or paper check who may not have a bank account.

VA’s [Veterans Banking Benefits](#) and AMBA’s [Veterans Benefits Banking Program](#) websites have details for identifying participating banks.

To have your federal benefits electronically transferred to a veteran’s designated financial institution (e.g. bank), VA beneficiaries interested in changing [direct deposit options](#) can also call 1-800-827-1000 with their relevant banking information.

[VA financial literacy](#) information is an additional resource available to veterans and VA beneficiaries.



SANTA AND FRIENDS VISIT VETERANS AT STATE HOME



Special thanks to Santa and hundreds of elves for their visits to the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home this month. Their visits brought holiday cheer, gifts, and food to our heroes.



VA ANNOUNCES PROPOSAL TO INCREASE ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has submitted to Congress a waiver request and pilot program under Section 152 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 ([MISSION Act](#)) to improve access to dental care for veterans.

The MISSION Act authorizes the VA to submit statutory waivers to Congress for the purpose of testing innovative service delivery models to improve the quality of care for America's veterans. Under existing statute, the VA has limited authority to provide dental services for veterans. With this waiver request, the VA is submitting a proposal to increase access to dental services for enrolled veterans ineligible for dental services through the VA by connecting them with community-based, pro bono or discounted dental service providers.

"The MISSION Act gave veterans real choice over their healthcare decisions," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie. "Through this pilot proposal, we want to ensure veterans have access to quality dental care through a network of providers who are proud to serve America's heroes."

Poor oral health can have a significant negative effect on overall health. Clinical research has found possible connections between gum problems and heart disease, bacterial pneumonia, and stroke. Upon approval of this pilot, the VA will work with groups such as the American Dental Association and Federally Qualified Health Centers across the U.S. to offer pro bono and discounted dental services to veterans.

"This waiver submission opens the door to years of groundbreaking innovation under the MISSION Act to improve care for our veterans, who are top of mind for this President and this Administration every single day," said Director Joe Grogan of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Section 152 of the MISSION Act led the VA to establish a Center for Care and Payment Innovation to test payment and service delivery models, with the goal of reducing expenditures while preserving or enhancing the quality of care for veterans. In implementing this section, the Secretary was granted authority to waive statutory requirements that may impede innovative approaches upon notification of and approval from Congress. The dental care proposal, titled the Care Coordination for Dental Benefits demonstration project under the Community Provider Collaborations for Veterans Pilot Program, is the first waiver request and pilot program submitted to Congress under this authority.

The VA Innovation Center, led by Michael Akinyele, is implementing Section 152 of the VA MISSION Act under the Office of Enterprise Integration. The VA published a proposed rule ([RIN 2900-AQ56](#)) establishing the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment on July 29, 2019 (84 FR 36507). The VA published a final rule implementing its authority on October 25, 2019; this rule became effective on November 25, 2019. "This pilot program enables us to explore leading practices across the U.S. health care system to meet Veterans needs today and into the future," said Dr. Melissa S. Glynn, Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration.

The VA will publish details of the Community Provider Collaborations for Veterans pilot program for public comment in the [Federal Register](#).

NON-PROFIT GROUP PURCHASES BADLANDS PAWN BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

A new veteran, military and civilian non-profit corporation has purchased the former Badlands Pawn building on West Russell Street. Officials from the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance, Inc., a 501(c)3 corporation, say the building will bring multiple veteran and military-themed organizations under one roof, led by the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. It will also provide a state-of-the-art location for entertainment, events and meetings, as well as an eventual military museum.

“The Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting veterans, military servicemembers, and their families, all while integrating the civilian community into the process. Anyone with a love of country is welcome and encouraged to support and participate in this unprecedented endeavor,” states Ken Teunissen, the vice-chair of the Alliance.

Teunissen describes the Alliance initiative as the most innovative in the nation, with 100 percent of the proceeds going to support military and veteran organizations and causes. He added that much of the building’s cost was paid through private donations, but that fundraising is under way to pay the balance and ensure the building is ready to open in early 2020.



“We are extremely excited to provide this type of opportunity,” Teunissen said. “I’m not aware of any facility in the nation that brings together multiple veteran and military organizations, celebrates and preserves their individual identities, yet also joins forces for other causes such as helping homeless veterans and ensuring honor guards for military and veteran funerals.”

Teunissen noted that the honor guard issue is particularly important considering the pending arrival of South Dakota’s first state veterans cemetery. “The Alliance will be unlike anything in the nation, but also exactly what our veterans, military members and their families deserve. It will demonstrate how our community and state lead the way in taking care of those who protect us.”

Teunissen said the building purchase is the first of many steps needed to open the doors. If all goes as planned, the building would be fully-operational in the spring of 2020.



Connections

Connections is a 12-week psychoeducational group designed by Brene' Brown PhD, LMSW.

Brene' Brown has conducted years of research on shame and vulnerability and the group curriculum consists of videos and exercises designed to help address a variety of issues including:

- Trauma
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Self-esteem/self-worth
- Boundaries in relationships
- Connecting to others more authentically

The Connections group will help you to better understand behavior patterns that keep you stuck, provide relief and understanding of where your discomfort is coming from, and gain ability to feel a deeper connection to yourself and others.

Women's Group

Tuesdays

January 14th-March 31st, 2020

3:00PM-4:30PM

Men's Group

Thursdays

January 17th-April 2nd, 2020

3:00PM-4:30PM

All groups will be held at the Sioux Falls Vet Center (must be Vet Center eligible) and will occur in 2 separate cohorts for men and women. Each group will be limited to 5 participants.

If interested in attending this group, please contact:

Heather Bailey, MSW CSW-PIP
(605) 330-4552

Sioux Falls Vet Center
3200 W 49th Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57106

Schedule an appointment for screening/intake

STATE VETERANS HOME OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS

In an effort to recruit and retain our nursing team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, we are continually looking for new avenues to consider while investing in the professional and personal growth of our staff.

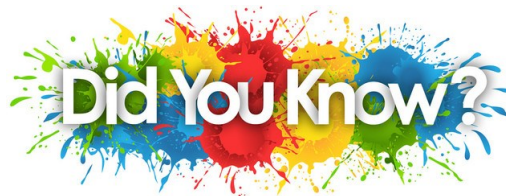
Utilizing Reinert estate funds, the Home will be, for the second consecutive year, sponsoring and offering scholarships to Western Dakota Tech (WDT) students wishing to enter into or who are currently WDT students applying for entrance into the licensed practical nurse (LPN) program.

WDT works closely with the sponsors and also utilizes funding for the Build Dakota Scholarship program.

"We're excited to partner with Western Dakota Tech and Build Dakota Scholarship," said MJFSVH Director of Nursing Susan Wilcox. "It's a great opportunity for our CNAs to further their careers in the nursing field. It allows MJFSVH to retain staff we've already invested in and keep them and their families in the Hot Springs area."



Left to right: Danita Simons, MaryKay Payton, Noel Beug, Raven Rush, Susan Wilcox and WDT Asst Director of Scholarships Jennie Best.



Life Alert option with the VA is a case-by-case basis.

First, veteran must be enrolled in VA healthcare.

Next, the veteran needs to talk to their primary care provider at the VA to see if the veteran is an eligible candidate.

If the VA deems the veteran eligible, they will "prescribe" the veteran life alert and the VA will pay for the service.





Sioux Falls Veteran Center

12 Week Anger Management Group

(Based on Cognitive Behavioral Techniques)

When: Thursdays (Jan 30th – April 16, 2020)

Time: 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Where: 3200 W. 49th Street – Sioux Falls, SD 57106

Contact: Orlando George – 605-330-4552

Participants must register with Sioux Falls Vet Center prior to Group



Whole Health Basic Training



Get the most out of your VA health care benefits!

**Essential learning courses for every enrolled Veteran and every
transitioning service member**

All courses are free & no appointments are needed for these drop-in classes.

You may bring a support person.

Contact: Jay Hunter, Peer Support Specialist, Whole Health Peer Leader, 605-336-3230, extension 7930,

Jason.Hunter2@va.gov

Orientation to Whole Health and VA Resources: This class will introduce you to VA's Whole Health approach to care and help you understand the services provided through the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System.

Intro to Whole Health: Led by Veteran peers, this is designed to introduce you to VA's Whole Health approach to care. You will learn how your strengths combined with our programs and services can help empower and equip you to live your life to the fullest.

Beginner Yoga: This class focuses on breathing techniques, physical postures and movements, guided rest, and focusing the mind.

Tai Chi: This class involves a series of slow, meditative body movements to promote balance, strength, inner peace and calm.

*There are no classes held on Federal holidays

CLASS	DATES*	TIME	PLACE
Orientation to Whole Health and VA Resources	March 11, 2020 June 10, 2020 September 9, 2020	1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, Integrative Health, Building 52 Room 107
Introduction to Whole Health	Third Thursday of each month	12:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Vet Center 3200 W 49 th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57106
Tai Chi	Mondays weekly Wednesdays weekly	3:30 – 4:30 p.m. 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.	Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, Integrative Health, Building 52 Room 107
Chair Yoga	Tuesdays weekly	3:30 – 4:30 p.m.	Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, Integrative Health, Building 52 Room 107
Beginner Yoga	Thursdays weekly	3:30 – 4:30 p.m.	Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, Integrative Health, Building 52 Room 107



The Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home

Memorial Day Show and Shine Car Show

11:30 am – 3:00 pm May 25th, 2020 in Hot Springs,
SD. No judging or classes, but the first 50 receive a
Dash Plaque

Come with your Hot Rod, Custom Car, Favorite Car
or Motorcycle, enjoy a free BBQ and let our
residents take a trip down memory lane with you!

Please RSVP by May 15th to 605-745-5127 x1500116



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 23-25—State Offices Closed

2020

Jan 1—State Offices Closed

Jan 14—State of the State Address

Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

Jan 17—BHSU Military Appreciation Night—BHSU Young Center—Spearfish—5:30 pm (MT)

Jan 18—Military Family Carnival and Resource Fair—Central Church (2628 W. Ralph Rogers Rd)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—5:00 pm (CT)

Jan 27—VFW State Legislative Mixer—Moose Lodge—Fort Pierre—6:00—8:30 pm (CT)

Feb 10—State American Legion Legislative Reception—AL Post 8—Pierre—5:30—8:00 pm (CT)

Feb 21-23—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center—Oacoma

Mar 25—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)

Mar 27-29—SD Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Dakota Sioux Casino—Watertown

May 15-17—DAV State Convention—Brookings

May 30—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7

June 3-7—VFW State Convention—Aberdeen

Jun 18-21—American legion State Convention—Huron

Aug 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota Conference Center—Pierre

Sep 3—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair

Sep 3-7—SD State Fair

Sep 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8 (Tentative)

Oct 11—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 9 (Tentative)



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

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